FUNNY WORLD #3

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Gad, K-a's membership is dwindling rapidly--18 members now, and six of those hanging on by their fingernails. And yet, paradoxically, the magazine seems to be growing thicker and better as our membership shrinks. Perhaps the root of our current troubles lies in what happened last spring, when our membership was larger than it is now, but K-a was very thin, both in pages and content. What was happening to K-a then was what seems to happen to most Jerry Bails projects when Jerry grows bored with them--they shrivel and die. This isn't Jerry's fault, of course, but the fault of we who fail to take up the slack left by his departure. Maybe things are starting to change now that the Thompsons are wholly in charge; I hope so. I was reconciled to K-a's death when Jerry announced his resignation as CM, but now I would hate to see it die. The difference is that I've become a much more active member than in the past. That makes a big difference. What I've finally started to do is what everyone should do: use K-a, instead of just tossing in your four pages every three months and then expecting the other members to entertain you. K-a should be a workshop, and I was pleased to see by your mailing comments that some of you agree with me on this. If nothing else, it's a great place for thinking out loud.

Now, if only I would stop talking about using K-a for trial runs for meaty articles and write one.

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Steve Kelez' induction into the Army raises an interesting question: should we have less stringent publishing requirements for members of the armed forces? With the demands of the war scooping up more and more comics fans, it may be something to consider.

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Bonus points are of little use to members who already have complete files of K-a; so perhaps we could accumulate them against a possible "sabbatical" from K-a, during which we would not have to meet the minimum publishing requirements. The need for such a sabbatical might arise for any number of reasons--illness,

the press of business, or simple APA-weariness.

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I recently picked up a 1958 Sunday comics section from the Little Rock DEMOCRAT which contains a humor strip called "Mrs. Lyons' Cubs," by "Stan Lee and Al Hartley." I don't know if this is the Marvel Stan Lee or not, but anyone who wants this Sunday section is welcome to it for a stamped, self-addressed manila envelope. The only other strip in the section of much interest is "The Phantom."

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THE WOES OF WALT DISNEY'S COMICS

The average circulation of WALT DISNEY'S COMICS & STORIES for the 12 months ending October 1 was 346,250, or 65,000 fewer than last year, and 110,000 fewer than in 1964. This is a precipitous decline indeed, and it's hard to see how WDC can survive another two years like the last two. Why the decline? Well, 1964 was the year Carl Barks stopped doing the "Donald Duck" strip regularly, and 1965 was the year "Donald Duck" was relegated to the back of the book and replaced as the lead strip by "The Walt Disney Theater." Thanks to the circulation figures, it's possible to measure quite precisely just how essential Donald Duck has been to the success of WALT DISNEY'S. And not just Walt Disney's Donald Duck, but Carl Barks' Donald Duck. The current "Donald Duck" strip is extraordinarily bad, with watery, anonymous art and scripts that repeat the same weak plot almost without variation (Duckburg, or Daisy's club, or some group wants to win an award or achieve some distinction, and Donald louses things up until the last minute, when he finally comes up with a day-saving idea). This vital weakness--a dull plot made to seem even duller by repetition--is compounded by the elevation of Daisy Duck to co-star status. Kids today may very well be more interested in boy-girl relationships than kids in my day (or maybe I was just backward), but it's doubtful they'll ever feel the intense interest in Daisy that the parent-child relationship of Donald and his nephews aroused. A co-star girl friend for Porky Pig, or Mickey Mouse, is dandy; they're more "stable" and "responsible" characters than Donald Duck and Bugs Bunny--and they're not as popular. Gold Key is making something like the same mistake they're making with Donald by giving Bugs Bunny a girl friend (Honey Bunny). But with Bugs, at least, the girl friend is more like Bugs than Daisy is like Donald, and the art and writing for the new six-page strips in BUGS BUNNY are far, far superior to what Donald Duck is suffering under.

The only bright spot in the WDC picture is the "Mickey Mouse" strip. The serial which concluded in the January issue ("The Treasure of Oomba Loomba") is an adaptation of an old newspaper serial which was first reprinted in WDC #4 and #5, in 1941. A lot of changes were made in this adaptation, but at least some of the flavor of the old newspaper strips was preserved. If GK continues to draw on the old serials (some of which were never published in a comic book, either in straight reprints or adaptations), the Mickey Mouse strip might finally regain some of the popularity it enjoyed when I was thrilling (sort of) to "The Phantom Blot" and "The House of Seven Haunts."

As for "Donald Duck," the only hope I see now is to start reprinting the old Carl Barks strips again--in sequence, this time. With Barks, that's important. The current strip is hopeless in every way--art, story, everything.

I wonder, really, if WDC could survive on a less-than-monthly schedule. I would

guess that Gold Key would kill the comic outright before cutting it to an eight-times-yearly or bi-monthly schedule. A less-than-monthly schedule would probably only aggravate circulation problems, by interfering with mail-order subscriptions, still a large part of WDC's circulation. No, I think WDC will survive as a monthly or not at all, and right now I can't believe it'll last another year.

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HAS ANYBODY SEEN: THE SPIRIT #2; FIGHTING AMERICAN #2; THE JETSONS #23; TOP CAT #21; MAGILLA GORILLA #10, or HENRY BREWSTER #7? Most of these comics haven't been published, probably, but I just want to make sure.

And does anyone know if DONALD DUCK #422 (1952) was reprinted this summer? I heard some vague rumor that it was, but never saw it on any of our news-stands.

And has the second edition of WHO'S WHO IN COMICS FANDOM (which was supposed to have been published in 1965) ever been published? I'm supposed to receive a copy when/if it comes out, but I've had so many changes of address the last couple of years it could very easily have been sent to the wrong place.

And one more query: I've seen mention of a "dealer" named Don Foote, but can't recall ever having seen an ad or price list of his. Is this fellow really a dealer, or not? And if he is, how does one get in touch with him?

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FUNNY ANIMAL WATCHING

In case you didn't notice, UNCLE SCROOGE has converted to reprints, now that Carl Barks has retired. The cover and the lead story in the January issue are from US #10, June-August 1955. As with many Gold Key reprints, the coloring has been redone, but this time the change is for the better, with none of the single-color backgrounds and other "unnatural" colors of GK's first few years of independent life.

By contrast, some of GK's previously all-reprint comic books are now using original material. The six-page lead stories in the recent issues of PORKY PIG, BUGS BUNNY, WOODY WOODPECKER, DAFFY DUCK and TOM AND JERRY have all been new. One reason for this, probably, is that the artists illustrating these strips are free for other work now that such Hanna-Barbera comic books as THE JETSONS, TOP CAT and MAGILLA GORILLA have vanished from the newsstands, at least temporarily. (From newsstands around here, anyway; maybe we've just got distribution problems, although I doubt it.) It's odd to think of it, but there now seem to be only three regularly published H-B comics: the bi-monthly FLINTSTONES and the quarterly CAVE KIDS and YOGI BEAR. This is quite a comedown from the enormous success the H-B comics were enjoying just a few years ago, when HUCKLEBERRY HOUND, for example, was selling something like half a million copies every issue. The old standbys, the characters who sold the best when Dell was at its peak, are becoming the Gold Key standbys, slowly but surely, displacing more recent titles whose appeal has proved to be short-lived. For example, if the BEEP BEEP THE ROAD RUNNER book is successfully revived (as GK obviously expects it to be), the lineup of Warner Bros. Cartoons comic books will be just the same as it was in the late 1950's, except for the absence of the monthly LOONEY TUNES.

This is all pleasant enough, since Donald Duck and Bugs Bunny are much better characters than Yogi Bear and Fred Flintstone and other such pallid, one-joke characters. But it would be much more pleasant if GK would use more and better original material, and most important, aim their funny animals at a slightly older age group. Comics directed at younger children have a limited sales potential, if only because the younger kids have less money to spend. But there is probably no type of comic book that has a greater sales potential than a really well-done funny-animal comic that is directed at kids in the 10-12 age group. UNCLE SCROOGE proved this, but no one ever tried to isolate the essence of SCROOGE's appeal and reproduce it in other funny-animal comic books. Carl Barks' characters have been used in countless strips, of course, and his plots have been stolen time and again, but that's as far as anyone went. What happened, instead, was that the writing for the funny-animal comics grew ever poorer, the colors ever brighter, the art ever simpler and emptier. What sparked all this, I suppose, was the great hue and cry over the comics in the early '50's, when even the funny animals came under fire (Dr. Wertham lays into BUGS BUNNY #250, "Diamond Daze," in SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT, for example). By transforming their funny-animal comics into insipid, butterfly-bright concoctions, Dell presumably hoped to soothe jittery parents who might otherwise have been tempted to chuck out every comic book in the house. This essentially condescending attitude finally came a cropper in 1961, when Dell's price increase resulted in the wholesale execution of such venerable titles as NEW FUNNIES and LOONEY TUNES.

Gold Key is still producing funny-animal comic books with one-and-a-half eyes on the parents, which is going to limit their sales, even with their sure-fire characters. What little attention is given to the kids who buy the comics is of a limited and uncomprehending sort. Richard Kyle's comments on "professionalism" in FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #6 are much in point here. At GK, evidently, what distinguishes a "professional" funny-animal strip is a sort of mechanical, cookie-cutter crispness in the art, and strict adherence to certain formulas in the scripts. Measuring "professionalism" this way amount to what Kyle calls "meaningless ritual." These tests have little or nothing to do with what makes a strip good, or what makes a comic book sell; but they're easy for the harried editor to apply. It's one test of an artist's greatness, of course, whether he can transcend the formulas and conventions within which he's forced to work, but GK's formulas and conventions seem especially restrictive. Only a cartoonist like Carl Barks, whose credentials were established in an earlier, perhaps happier comic-book era, can enjoy the freedom of ignoring at least some of the conventions and restrictions that set off the "professional" from the "unprofessional" strip.

For an example of GK's formulas at work: almost every funny-animal strip in the Dell and GK comics of the last 10 years or so plunges immediately into the action, without any development of character or situation, or even a pause for breath. We come upon Bugs and Elmer in the swamps of Africa, say, with only a minimal explanation as to how they got there. The idea, obviously, is that the little beggars who read the comics have such short attention spans that you've gotta hit 'em fast and hard, and never give them the opportunity to get bored. The trouble is, there's nothing quite so boring as a lot of aimless, frenzied, illogical activity, which is what the Dell/Gold Key books have been full of the last 10 years or so. (The sort of thing the Archie super-heroes have specialized in, to draw an example from the other side of the fence.) Most of the older funny-animal strips unfold at a more leisurely pace, and are largely free of all the formula tricks that have disfigured the funny-animal comics of recent years. The old strips weren't always better than the current product--many were execrable--but the quality of stories and art was considerably higher overall. This meant that the odds were much better that a few <u>really</u> fine comic books could be pub-

lished--and we got them. But you'll find no modern-day equivalent of Carl Barks or John Stanley emerging in today's Gold Key funny-animal comic books. You'll find reprints of some of the classics, of course, but there's no room for new classics in the rigid Gold Key Scheme of Things.

Still, the old characters are regaining their popularity...some of the art is still of high quality...the writing for such books as THE PHANTOM BLOT and SUPER GOOF is always at least passable and sometimes better...and so forth. Perhaps, if the funny animals grow popular enough again, Gold Key's formulas will have to yield to the sheer weight of the demand for new material...and higher rates will attract artists of genuine stature...perhaps, but I doubt it. Still, for anyone who remembers the glories of the past and hopes for a funny-animal "renaissance" of the sort the super heroes have enjoyed, keeping an eye on the Gold Key funny animals is worth the pain.

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One of my favorite comic-book characters visited Little Rock not long ago. No, not Little Lulu or Donald Duck--Roy Rogers. Roy is hooked up in some way with a local insurance magnate, and was in town for a banquet staged by said magnate in his own honor. Roy, and Douglas Fairbanks Jr., who is also in on the deal in some way or another, held a press conference of sorts at the magnate's office before the banquet began. I was assigned to cover the press conference, as a part of my duties as a fearless, hard-hitting reporter (the hell with that "mild-mannered" crud). As things worked out, I was the only real reporter there, the rest of the "press" consisting mainly of TV cameramen and a couple of still photographers. Believe it or not, though, I didn't pull any plugs or steal any film or assault any cameramen. I'll just never be a Top Reporter like Poteet Canyon, I'm afraid. Anyway, I got to ask all the questions for 20 minutes--something less than a thrill, since it's hard to know what to ask Roy Rogers and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. at this stage of their careers. Doug Jr. is rather frayed around the edges, sad to say, but Roy looks almost as trim and youthful as he did in those gaudy photographs that decorated the covers of his comic books for years. (I thought about taking along one of the comics for Roy to autograph, but didn't; it's probably just as well, since I never got close enough to him to even shake his hand.) This time, though, he was dressed conservatively, at least for a cowboy star, in a black western-style suit, black boots, and string tie. He's supposed to make string ties as a hobby, which somehow seems like an un-Roy-Rogerish thing for him to do. The press conference didn't yield much, covering only the predictable topics--Rogers' trip to Vietnam, Rogers' and Fairbanks' current activities, their views on actors in politics, that sort of garbage--although it did leave me with a generally favorable impression of Ole Roy, who seems about as pleasant and decent as a highly religious multi-millionaire can be. Fairbanks didn't say much, and didn't swash a buckle (or buckle a swash, for that matter) so I didn't carry away a very distinct impression of him, except to recall that his clothes, the wealthy English gentleman's clothes, were considerably brighter than Roy's. The most interesting things I heard during the evening came from a local radio man who was once a Pinkerton agent, and spent some time in 1959 bodyguarding Roy in Oregon. It may be common knowledge, but I didn't know before that the "feud" between Roy Rogers and Gene Autry is quite genuine--meaning, it's over money. Something to do with television residuals, evidently. If the merits of the dispute were to be measured by physical fitness and clean living, Roy would win easily. Compared to him, Autry now looks like a sack of wet beans.

And say--what ever did happen to Gabby Hayes?

A FUNNY ANIMAL QUIZ

The fun of trivia tests, as everyone knows, is in giving them, not taking them. It's for my own pleasure that I put this "minutia quiz" together, not for anyone else's; I may not even publish the answers. But, for anyone whose memories and enthusiasms roughly parallel mine, here are the "rules:" all the references to be identified and questions to be answered are drawn from the Dell funny-animal comic books of the 1940's and early 1950's. I've tried to eliminate questions drawn from recently reprinted comic books, and also questions that could be answered by reference to animated cartoons, instead of the comic books. This is a minutia test, meaning I've dug deeper for question than I would have in a trivia test, but I've tried to avoid dredging up obscurities of the sort that filled Dan Alderson's mind-boggler.

Scoring one point per question.

1. The Junior Sub-Teen-Age Debbies Club.
2. On whose doorstep was Henery Hawk left as a foundling egg?
3. Hopalong Casserole.
4. The Barrel.
5. Tubby, in the LITTLE LULU comic books, had one last name in the early stories and a different last name later on; give both last names.
6. What was the cannibal's name in the "Pat, Patsy and Pete" strip in LOONEY TUNES?
7. Colonel Southern.
8. What is the lowest rank in the Junior Woodchucks?
9. Smiling John Romper.
10. "Prisoner Number 3B909664780, alias Torpedo Wolf, alias Killer-Diller Wolfie Boy, alias Lobo the Louse, alias Houdini Wolf."
11. Mr. Omi-Akin-Bak.
12. Petey Pack Rat and Jackson Rabbit.
13. Shadrack and Honeysuckle.
14. The Gneezles.
15. Where did Bucky Bug live?
16. Hi-Yah Wahoo, Toby Bear and Maggie Lou.
17. On top of what hill was Uncle Scrooge's money bin first located?
18. Tommy and Marion.
19. Who was the founder of Duckburg?
20. "Jackaruni! Cackaruni! Mackaruni!"
21. Snapper and Drooley.
22. Petrox.
23. Horace Mustang, Sagebrush Savage, Trigger Trueshot, Ramrod Ransom, Stumpalong Hoppity, Rimfire Remington, and Carson Sage.
24. Foola Zoola.
25. What was Gladstone Gander so ashamed of that he kept it locked away in a safe?
26. What was the name of the whaling ship on which Mickey Mouse sailed?
27. Camp Waha-Go-Gaga.
28. What was Knothead Woodpecker's original name?
29. Who was king of Tosa Faka and adjoining subdivisions?
30. Colonel Basset (no relation to Fred).

Total possible score is 30, and if you score anywhere near that well, you're probably spending too much time reading old funny-animal comic books.

Speaking of trivia tests...it's amusing to see how the test compiler's own fondest memories are revealed in them. The Dell paperback, for example, was obviously put together by a couple of guys, a few years younger than I am, whose strongest memories are of the Dell funny-animal comic books of the mid-Fifties, just as my memories center on the funny-animal comic books of the late Forties and early Fifties. Their questions on their favorites are sometimes absurdly obscure (I mean, who cares what color Elmer Fudd's shoes were?) and their questions on the movies, radio shows and comic books which they don't remember, but other people do, are sometimes absurdly obvious. Or so it seems. But then, everything's relative when it comes to trivia tests. One man's memory-awakener is another man's irrelevancy, and I suppose people who read the Dell funny-animal comics of the mid-Fifties as avidly as Goodgold and Carlinsky did wouldn't find a question about the color of Elmer Fudd's shoes silly at all.

The Dell book is full of all sorts of minor errors, of course, but for the hell of it, I'll mention that the Claw and Dr. Ohm were character in MIGHTY MOUSE, not MICKEY MOUSE, as the book has it in what's obviously a typographical error.

Perhaps the oddest thing about the John Stanley-Mal Whyte GREAT COMICS GAME (a pretty poor trivia test, for my money) is the number of copyright holders who must have refused permission to reproduce pictures of their characters. There's no reason otherwise for the absence of the Disney, DC, and King Features characters, among many others.

Anyway, in putting together my little trivia test, I've tried to improve on my models by drawing my questions from a strictly limited body of material, and by asking questions of roughly equivalent obscurity. Few if any of you can judge the results, of course, but I think I did pretty well, and I had a good time rummaging through some old comic books I hadn't read recently.

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THE PITFALLS OF POLITICS

Many of you--maybe all of you--have seen Richard Kyle's LETTERHEAD #1, which is concerned in large part with the recent Thompson-Johnson exchange over the depiction of Communists in the super-hero comic books. At least, that's what the dispute was about originally. By the time Richard is done with it, it's a dispute over the merits of Communism and American-style capitalism. Seen this way, there's no question but that Richard and Glen have the best of the argument. Whatever its shortcomings, the American system is at least less likely to produce evil men and evil actions than the Soviet system, and the evil men and evil actions we do produce are rarely as evil--or as powerful--as their Soviet counterparts. I could have lived with Jungle Jim Johnson as my governor (although I won't have to, thank heaven), just as I survived 12 years of Orval Faubus, but I wouldn't care to live in a nation ruled by a Josef Stalin. It's asking too much of human institutions that they be free of defects, and it's foolish to imply that because all human institutions are imperfect, they're somehow morally indistinguishable.

But the real question, which now has indeed been "buried in irrelevance," is now Communists, or Nazis, or Attila's Huns, or any products of any despicable political or economic system are to be portrayed in the comics. We've retreated from this question into the larger question of the merits of the different systems. It's impossible to escape entirely from such questions in a discussion of this sort, of course, but it's silly to devote time and energy to sophomoric bickering when there are questions directly related to the comics that deserve exploring. If we are to portray Communists or Nazis in the comics, then the Thompsons are right: we should avoid characterizing all of them as "the worst and most dangerous villains of our times." This what Glen demands, and this to me means asking for a stereotyped portrayal of all Communists, even though it means something else to Richard Kyle. Most Communists are dangerous, but they're dangerous in different ways, and not all are dangerous because they're "villains."

But to take a step forward--and not backward into the morass of discussion of philosophical, political or economic issues--let's ask whether Communists should exist in the super-hero comic-book world at all. I say no.

Super-heroes have no business fighting "real" menaces of any type, whether Communists or Chicago gangsters, or dealing with "real" problems, in a "morality play" or otherwise. I've set out my basic arguments on the point elsewhere (in a letter published in FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #5). Super-heroes are basically absurd, and the more incongruously "realistic" their surroundings, the more that absurdity is emphasized. It makes no sense to have a super-hero fighting Communists or Nazis or whatever if it's (1) clear that he could absolutely defeat them if he wanted to, and (2) he doesn't, even though involved explanations are given as to why Superman doesn't mop up the Viet Cong or Thor doesn't send his Uru hammer on a quick trip through the Imperial Palace at Peking. If it's somehow better that ordinary mortals should conduct their wars with little hlep from super-heroes, there's no reason we shouldn't clean up crime on our own, too.

This, though, is a comics fan's argument, and as such is of slight concern to the kids who buy most comic books and the publishers who try to sell them. The more important argument against injecting super-heroes into "realistic" situations is an old one: super-heroes are vigilantes, whose operations take place outside the law. "Outside the law" doesn't mean "against the law," not by any means, but even well-intentioned comic-book vigilanteism is dangerous, and confusing to children, if the criminals or Communist soldiers or other menaces the super-heroes battle are the sort of menaces that would ordinarily be dealt with

by some arm of the government. Super-villains or other "unrealistic" menaces are proper opponents for super-heroes, since your local police department is not prepared to go a few rounds with the likes of Galactus. An unrelieved string of super-villains can be a dreadful bore, of course, but if they're juggled skillfully with other story elements, the result can be a highly enjoyable comic book, even if your tastes lean to UNCLE SCROOGE and MELVIN MONSTER, as mine do. FANTASTIC FOUR is probably the prime example of The Right Way To Do It.

On the other hand, the Perrin-Foss "Black Phantom" strip in FI #6 is, sad to say, my choice for Horrible Example of the Month. I object to "Black Phantom" not because it advocates Negro equality, but because it advocates vigilanteism--against the law this time, and not just outside it. Steve Perrin says he's not doing this, of course, but it's what his hero does that counts. You cannot divorce an adventure character from the context in which he operates. If he's dealing with real problems in a real world, his actions are going to have meaning in terms of those problems. An "abstract" super-hero whose actions are without meaning is an impossibility, and so the Communist or Nazi super-hero Steve proposes would be a moral monstrosity.

What is especially astonishing is Steve's notion of the appropriate response to the terror in which some Southern Negroes live: roughing up the local Kluxers and threatening them with worse if they don't get in line.

Doing just what the Klan does to Negroes, in other words.

Wow.

What Steve is advocating, whether he realizes it or not, is that acting outside the law--and even against the law--is perfectly acceptable when the problems are big enough and the authorities are not doing enough to solve them. The trouble is, the Ku Klux Klan agrees with that philosophy completely.

The larger question is whether any comic strip--"Black Phantom" or "Pogo" or "Little Orphan Annie"--has any business dealing with political questions directly or in propagandizing for or against any particular philosophy. Again, I say no, not because I think the comics are second-class citizens of the arts, but for precisely the opposite reason. Any overt propagandizing kills the interplay between dialogue and drawing that is at the heart of the comic strip's claim to artistic standing. Comic strips probably should deal with big questions--but only in terms of the people who hold beliefs or espouse philosophies or promote ideas--never in terms of the beliefs and philosophies and ideas themselves. "Pogo" was at its best when Walt Kelly created distinct characters and let them go their own ways; because they spoke in their own voices, and not merely as mouthpieces for their creator, the political points Kelly wanted to make had much greater impact than the political points Kelly tries to make today, at the top of his voice. What has happened to "Pogo" should serve as an object lesson to those who look to the comics for the reinforcement of their prejudices. It may give you that good, warm, self-righteous feeling to see your favorite character clobbering the Commies or routing the John Birch Society, but this sort of thing is hell on the comics themselves.

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Robert Schoenfeld: I bought the October 8 issue of the St. Louis POST-DISPATCH, for the Rex Morgan article you mention in ON THE DRAWING BOARD #53--but no Rex Morgan article was to be found.

QUESTIONS....

Some of you, I know, are familiar with the science-fiction fanzine LORE, which in each issue features a column of "Questions" about science-fiction and related subjects, sent in by the readers (or by the editors). The questions are numbered and answers are published in a separate column as they come in. I'm doing the same sort of thing here, except that all the questions are my own. I don't expect that K-a members will be able to supply many of the answers I want, but this strikes me as a convenient way to keep track of all the things I'd like to know about the comics. I'll publish more questions in coming issues, and answers as they turn up. For that matter, if anyone else has a question about the Dell funny animals, or Dell comics in general, send it in. I might even be able to answer it, who knows.

(1) I've been trying to find out for some time just when the Walter Lantz characters began appearing in the Dell comic books, and I've had little luck. I know, thanks to John Ryan, that Andy Panda was in THE FUNNIES as early as #61 (November 1941), but there were at least two AP strips published before then. Both these strips are listed in the Catalog ofCopyright Entries, but the copyright dates given there are not the copyright dates for the issues of THE FUNNIES published those months. However, the dates are the same as those for the September and October 1941 issues of CRACKAJACK FUNNIES and SUPER COMICS. So, several things are possible: the Andy Panda strip started in CRACKAJACK, or in SUPER, in the September issue of one of those magazines, and was switched to THE FUNNIES with the November issue; or the strip began in THE FUNNIES and the wrong copyright dates were listed in the Catalog; or the strip began even earlier than the September 1941 issue of some comic book, and these earlier appearances were omitted from the Catalog for some reason (this happened more than once with the early comic books).

A secondary question is when the other Lantz characters got their own strips in THE FUNNIES. The Copyright Catalog indicates that the "Oswald"and "Li'l Eight Ball" strips first appeared in THE FUNNIES #64; the only question is whether they started even earlier than that.

Yet another question is how many--and what kind of--comic-book appearances the Lantz characters made before they turned up in the Dell comics. In COMIC WORLD #5, Rick Durrell mentions a short "Oswald the Lucky Rabbit" strip in MORE FUN #7 (1936). This sounds like the Lantz (originally Disney) character; was it? If so, what other appearances did "Oswald the Lucky Rabbit"--and other Lantz characters--make in MORE FUN and other early comic books?

If anyone can supply any information on these questions--positive or negative--please do. If, for example, you have a copy of THE FUNNIES #59, and it doesn't contain an "Andy Panda" strip, I need to know that. Ditto for CRACKAJACK #39 and #40, and SUPER #40 and #41. If I know which comics didn't have an AP strip, I can figure out by a process of elimination where the strip must have been featured. The first "Andy Panda" strip should be a genuine "origin" strip, unlike most funny-animal strips, probably starting with Andy's birth (if that's not an "origin," I don't know what is), so it should be easy to tell if any AP strip you run across was the first or not.

And incidetally, I'll be glad to pay for photocopies of early Lantz-character covers and strips, such as the first AP strip, the Oswald strips in MORE FUN, etc.

(2) Rick Durrell has told me that "Marge" Henderson (Little Lulu's creator) had drawings in early (1938) issues of KING COMICS. Can anyone tell me more about these? Did "Little Lulu" ever appear in KING, either in gag panel of the sort that appeared in SATURDAY EVENING POST, or in strips?

(3) There was a 1959 Dell Four Color comic (#1072) called "Marge's BLYTHE," featuring a teen-aged character presumably created by the creator of Little Lulu. I know of no other comic-book appearances by "Blythe," and I can't recall seeing her in magazine panels or elsewhere. Does anyone know anything about this character?

(4) Who was the cartoonist who did so many "Mickey Mouse" strips in the early '50's--the "Sky Adventure" one-shot reprinted last winter, for example, and serials like "Monarch of Medioka?"

(5) Who was the cartoonist who illustrated most of the "Bugs Bunny" strips in LOONEY TUNES in the middle and late '40's, and also did one-shots like "Frozen Kingdom" and "Dangerous Venture?"

(6) Who was the cartoonist who illustrated "Mary Jane & Sniffles" in LOONEY TUNES, starting in 1952, and also did a variety of Walt Disney strips, such as the "Peter Pan" one-shots? His style is similar to Walt Kelly's, and he took over for Kelly on the "Peter Pan" giveaways in 1950.

(7) Who is the cartoonist who did most of the "Bugs Bunny" strips in the late '50's, and other Warner Bros. Cartoons strips besides? His work makes up most of the BEST OF BUGS BUNNY giant published this fall. I believe he's still working for Gold Key.

(8) Who was the cartoonist who did many "Bugs Bunny" and "Porky Pig" strips in the early '50's? He illustrated the "Water Wizard" strip reprinted in the January issue of PORKY PIG, for example, and the "Hot Rod Hare" strip reprinted in BUGS BUNNY last summer.

(9) When did the "Our Gang" series of movie shorts end? I'm just curious whether the end of the strip in OUR GANG COMICS coincided with the end of the movie series.

(10) I've seen mention recently of a Dell comic called "Famous Stories," published in 1942, that was evidently of the CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED type. How many issues of this comic were published, what were their dates, and what "classics" were "adapted?"

(11) I need the dates of the following issues of these comics: POPULAR #37, SUPER #10, CRACKAJACK #9, TIP TOP COMICS #29. The date in each case is either February or March 1939. I also need the date of DICK TRACY #24.

(12) RED RYDER COMICS was published by Harley for its first few issues (the first two were called HI-SPOT) and then by K. K. until it expired in 1957. With which issue did K. K. begin publishing this comic? I would guess #10, because the dating of the comic changed then, but does anyone know for sure?

(13) Was there a Walt Kelly "Albert and Bumbazine" strip in either OUR GANG #5 or #6?

(14) With what issue of OUR GANG were the "Barney Bear" and "Benny Burro" strips combined--#11 or #12?

(15) The title of NEW FUNNIES was changed to TV FUN IES for a few issues in 195[illegible]; for what issues was the title change in effect?

(16) The "Young Hawk" strip was the filler in THE LONE RANGER for many years, but appeared first at least as early as the first issue of NEW FUNNIES (#65) in 194[illegible]. It was dropped from NEW FUNNIES after a few issues. Did "Young Hawk" appear anywhere else until its introduction in THE LONE RANGER in (I think) 1949?

(17) Dell published a WAR COMICS STORIES comic book in the early Forties, according to one price list I've seen; does anyone know: (1) the dates of the first three issues, and (2) the dates of any issues from #9 on?

(18) Does anyone know anything about a "U.S.A." comic Dell is supposed to have published in 1941?

(19) There were two magazines called FUN COMICS published in the '30's--the one listed in the [illegible]BOOK, which lasted for five issues in 1936, and another in 1937, which also lasted for five issues, the first dated March and the last dated December--in which of these magazines did Walt Kelly's work appear?

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[illegible] COMMENTS

Dick Pryor: For what it's worth, I would like to see you reprint some of the early super-hero strips, especially strips that are unlikely to be reprinted elsewhere anytime soon (i.e., the "Batman" strip from DETECTIVE #27). I can't say I'm quite so enthusiastic about a continuation of the "Shadow" article.

Sherman and Wayne Howard: Gorg. Frankly, I can't see how anyone can praise the "Peanuts" TV specials as "truly magnificent." Since most of the gags are taken from the strips, which are reprinted in the books, they're thrice-familiar by the time they reach the TV screen--which wouldn't be so bad if they weren't so ill-adapted to use in animated cartoons in the first place. But it's the children's voices that are most jarring. They should have used adults capable of doing plausible-sounding children's voices, if such can still be found. The whole secret of "Peanuts" as a comic strip is that it deals with "childish" problems in "adult" terms, thus pointing up the similarity of "childish" and "adult" problems, and their solutions. (The LITTLE LULU comic book did much the same sort of thing, although in different terms, and perhaps more subtly.) What the "Peanuts" cartoons need, then, are voices that are both child-like and adult, not the sweet, charming children's voices presently being used on the specials. It's the sound of the voices used in animated cartoons that's all-important, not what is said. That's why Donald Duck's voice is perfect, even though you can't understand what he's saying, while the "Peanuts" voices are all wrong, even though what's being said comes through clearly. And it was just plain dumb not to let Snoopy speak in his own "voice" during the WW I-pilot sequence.

Fred Patten: More, please, on the Belgian comics. I'll be ordering some from you as soon as I have the chance to check out some of the German comics Don Draganski brought back for me from his trip to Europe last summer. This because I'm sure some of the Belgian strips are reprinted in the German comics; the Marsupilamis in particular look awfully familiar. Don brought back a couple of French Disney comics (which include original material as well as reprints from the U. S. comics), but none of the Dupuis comics. I like the idea of acquiring a few French-language comics, since that may spur me to refurbish my knowledge of the language, which is

in a terrible state of disrepair. ### I know the "Mary Jane & Sniffles" artist you're talking about, although I don't know his name. He began doing the strip with the February 1952 issue of LOONEY TUNES. I would guess that he had at least some writing for it, too, since the basic format of the strip was radically altered at the same time. Before, Mary Jane's adventures were always of the "dream" sort--she would drowse, be awakened by Sniffles, sink, and somehow or another visit a "land" populated by dolls, or crayons, or clocks, or go inside a watermelon, or visit a weather factory, or something of that sort. But starting with that February 1952 issue, all the "dream" trappings were gone, and all of Mary Jane's adventures took place in her own garden, or back yard, or whatever it was (it was at least as large as the Great Dismal Swamp), and usually involved only the local animals. I've always liked the MJ&S artist's work, too; it's similar to Walt Kelly's in some ways, and has that dark, fluid quality which is characteristic of a lot of Kelly's art. In fact, this cartoonist took over for Kelly on the "Peter Wheat" giveaways in 1950, and the styles there are so similar that some fans have mistaken the MJ&S cartoonist's work for Kelly's. The MJ&S cartoonist also did quite a few strips for the Disney comics, especially in the giants, as I recall. I believe he continued to do work for Dell up through the early 60's, but I would have to do some close checking before I could be sure of that. Apart from the art, his MJ&S strips weren't very good. The Thompsons have told me, though, that the two Four Colors were exceptions, and I'll take their word for this, since your own memories seem to back them up. I once owned both the Four Colors, but it's been at least 15 years since I read either of them, and I can't remember a thing about them except for the coverof the first one, published in 1952 (Mary Jane pouring tea for Sniffles as they sit under a toadstool). Rather oddly, though, I can remember the precise circumstances under which I first read that issue. I was a Dell fanatic in those days, and I used to ride downtown with my father every Saturday morning to tour the dime stores and pick up all the new issues. The dime stores always got their copies a week or two ahead of the drug stores, which isn't true today, forsome reason. I would take the bus home and read a comic or two until I got carsick. The first MARY JANE & SNIFFLES one-shot was in my bundle of treasures one week, I recall, as well as the first TWEETY and SYLVESTER one-shot, and I read the MJ&S for part of the way. You would think, since I remember where I sat on the bus, and what kind of day it was, that I was reading MJ&S when an elderly man got on at the Stiffs Station stop, that I would remember something about the comic itself; but no such luck. Anyway, if anyone comes up with either of the two MJ&S Four Colors, I'd like to buy it. Since these one-shots were evidently better than the strips in LOONEY TUNES, I'd like to have them at hand before writing any "biography" of Mary Jane and Sniffles. ### I might as well confess, after spending this much time with Mary Jane and her furry friend, that I went overboard last time in downgrading the funny animals. The reason for this basically is that I have a dread of the same thing happening to the funny animals that has happened to the super heroes--the astronomical prices, the crudzines full of pirated articles, the whole ugly business. This could never happen--at least not on anything like the same scale--but still, every once in a while I get the sort of goofy-kid letter that starts the hairs bristling along the nape of my neck. Fandom is just too, too full of kids who react like Pavlov's dog to any praise of any old comic book, and drool over any comic that's older than they are, whatever it is. Praise SUPER RABBIT loudly enough in a large-circulation fanzine, and before you know it, you'll have a dozen kids 'collecting" SUPER RABBIT, writing articles about him, and publishing fanzines devoted to furry-animal super heroes! (In this fantastic first issue of SUPER RABBIT, you'll find a great strip by the outstanding new fanama-artist, Gary [illegible]. Zema, called "Super Bunny," all about a great new hero, ***PLUS*** an Alley-caliber article on Carl Barks and a full-color pinup of SUPER RABBIT! For only 37¢, how can you go wrong?"). I like funny animals,

and I always have, ever since my father read the very early issues of NEW FUNNIES and WALT DISNEY'S COMICS to me over and over again, at my insistence, until I had memorized them word-for-word. My great and over-riding fear is that the funny animals will be taken up by people who don't really like them, but like being fans, and are ready and willing to be fans of anything that's handy. /// Rather ironically, after deriding the idea of sitting out a week of MICKEY MOUSES and settling down for an evening's reading, I did just that thing not too long ago. Just for the hell of it, I pulled out my run of 1946 issues and proceeded to read about two-thirds of them. Not for "Mary Jane & Sniffles," though, which I skimmed over pretty lightly, but for "Bugs Bunny" and "Elmer Fudd" and, occasionally, one of the other strips. It was good fun, but not something that should be done too often, of course. "Bugs Bunny" was a well-drawn strip in those days, not necessarily in the limited, technical sense (the relative heights of the characters can vary alarmingly from panel to panel, for example) but mostly because the artist had a real talent for creating illusions of height and depth. His skyscrapers are tall, tall enough to make your palms sweat if heights make you a little nervous, in the same way that Bob Kane's towers and skyscrapers in the old BATMAN could make you dizzy. Similarly, the WB cartoonists' caverns--and even his living rooms--have a vastness to them that's unique in funny-animal strips. His achievements are all the more remarkable when you consider that he was working with a standard eight-and-a-half page, with hardly any of the outsize panels that became common in the funny-animal comics later on. Some of the strips were very well-written, too; a nice sort of bonus. /// This has been ranging awfully far afield for a mailing comment. On to more pertinent matters. It would have been awfully hard for Bugs Bunny to have appeared in Big Little Books and penny-comics in the 1930's, since he never appeared in the movies until around 1940, in a supporting role in an Elmer Fudd cartoon. I think I've seen that cartoon, several years ago on an early-morning kiddie show on a Chicago TV station. It was one of the first cartoons in which BB appeared, anyway, since he didn't have his distinctive wise-guy voice at the time. And what are "penny-comics?" Can't say that I've ever heard of them. /// No, I don't collect the "Buster Brown" giveaways, but I have a lot of them I'll sell cheaply if anyone wants them. I acquired them not long ago when I bought a bundle of giveaways I thought would contain mostly issues of the WALT DISNEY COMICS and other Dell/K.K. giveaways, but instead it contained almost nothing but "Buster Brown." My own memories of the "Buster Brown" radio show are too vague for me to feel any nostalgic interest in them.

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Carl Barks fans should know about the September 1966 issue of CHEMISTRY, a scientific journal published by the American Chemical Society, which Gordon DeWolfe called to my attention. The magazine reproduces the top half of page 9 from the "Donald Duck" strip in the May 1949 issue of WALT DISNEY'S COMICS & STORIES, to accompany a brief article which tells of how a Danish inventor was denied a patent on a process for raising sunken ships, because Donald Duck had used a similar process earlier. What the article leaves unsaid is at least as interesting as what it contains. For instance, how on earth did the Patent Office know about this comic-book story? Anyone interested in obtaining the magazine should try sending 50¢ to the American Chemical Society, 1155 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036.

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I don't know how Alley nominations are to be handled this year, but whoever does the nominating should take a look at WALT DISNEY'S COMICS & STORIES #87 before casting his vote for BRAD ANDERSON or JOE SIMON again.

THE "OUR GANG" COMIC BOOKS

SECOND IN A SERIES OF INDEXES AND CHECKLISTS TO THE DELL/GOLD KEY COMIC BOOKS

I. DELL COMICS

A. Regularly published titles (monthlies, bi-monthlies, quarterlies)

OUR GANG COMICS

1942: 1-2 (#1 undated; bi-mo. starting with #2, dated Nov.-Dec. 1942)
1943: 3-8 (Bi-mo.)
1944: 9-14 (Bi-mo.)
1945: 15-20 (Bi-mo.)
1946: 21-29 (Bi-mo. through #23, May-June 1946, mo. starting with #24, July 1946)
1947: 30-41 (mo.)
1948: 42-53 (mo.)
1949: 54-65 (mo.)
1950: 66-77 (mo.)
1951: 78-89 (mo.)
1952: 90-101 (mo.)
1953: 102-113 (mo.)
1954: 114-125 (mo.)
1955: 126-137 (mo.)
1956: 138-149 (mo.)
1957: 150-161 (mo.)
1958: 162-173 (mo.)
1959: 174-185 (mo.)
1960: 186-197 (mo.)
1961: 198-209 (mo. through #208, Nov. 1961, bi-mo. starting with #209, Dec.-Jan. 1962)
1962: 210-212 (Bi-mo. through #211, Apr.-May 1962, quarterly, #212, July-Sept. 1962)

NOTES: (1) Title changes: Our Gang Comics, 1-39; Our Gang with Tom & Jerry, 40-59; Tom & Jerry Comics, 60-212.
(2) Gold Key issues: nos. 30014, 10058.

SPIKE AND TYKE

Four Color: 499, 577, 638.

1955: 4 (Quarterly starting with #4, Dec.-Feb. 1956)
1956: 5-8 (Quarterly)
1957: 9-12 (Quarterly)
1958: 13-16 (Quarterly)
1959: 17-20 (Quarterly)
1960: 21-24 (Quarterly through #24, Dec.-Feb. 1961)

Four Color: 1266.

MOUSE MUSKETEERS

Four Color: 475, 603, 642, 670, 711, 728, 768.

1957: 8-10 (Quarterly starting with #8, April-June 1957)
1958: 11-16 (Quarterly through #11, Jan.-Mar. 1958; bi-mo., #12, April-May 1958 - #15, Oct .-Nov. 1958; quarterly starting with #16, Dec.-Feb. 1959)
1959: 17-20 (Quarterly)
1960: 21 (Quarterly through #21, Mar.-May 1960)

Four Color: 1135, 1175, 1290.

NOTES: (1) Title changes: Two Mouseketeers, 475-642; Mouse Musketeers, 670-1290.

3. Titles published only as one-shots

TOM AND JERRY

Four Color: 193.

C. Giants

TOM AND JERRY WINTER CARNIVAL: No. 1 (1952) - No. 7 (1958). Title changed to Tom and Jerry Winter Fun with No. 3.

TOM AND JERRY SUMMER FUN: No. 1 (1954) - No. 4 (1957).

TOM AND JERRY BACK TO SCHOOL: No. 1 (1956).

TOM AND JERRY TOY FAIR: No. 1 (1958).

TOM AND JERRY PICNIC TIME: No. 1 (1958).

DELL ONE-SHOT GIANTS, 1959-1962

21. Tom and Jerry Picnic Time (1959)

II. GOLD KEY COMICS

10058: TOM AND JERRY

1963: 215-217 - May, Aug., Nov.
1964: 218-221 - Feb., May, Aug., Nov.
1965: 222-227 - Feb., Apr., June, Aug., Oct., Dec.
1966: 228-233 - Feb., Apr., June, Aug., Oct., Dec.

NOTES: (1) Successor to 30014, Tom and Jerry Funhouse.
(2) Title changes: Tom and Jerry Funhouse, 215; Tom and Jerry, 216-233.

30014: TOM AND JERRY FUNHOUSE

1962: 213 - Nov.
1963: 214 - Feb.

NOTES: (1) Succeeded by 10058, Tom and Jerry.

30014: TOM AND JERRY THE MOUSE FROM T.R.A.P.

1966: 1 - (October)

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I didn't bill my checklist of the Warner Bros. Cartoons comic books as the first in a series of indexes and checklists, but I've decided that's what it was. I had planned to publish similar indexes from time to time, but actually publishing them as a series, instead of as individual projects, may spur me to publish them more frequently, or to do a better job. In other words, describing each index or checklist as a part of a series won't make any difference in my plans, but it may make a difference in my performance.

This will be a "series" in name only, since the indexes and checklists won't fit any particular pattern or follow any particular order. This "Our Gang" checklist follows almost exactly the pattern of my WB Cartoons checklist in FW #1, but I don't guarantee that I won't become dissatisfied with this pattern later, and adopt a new one I think is better. There'll be duplication, too, since I hope to publish feature indexes later to comics I can now cover only in checklists like this one. I hope to publish more checklists in the near future, but they'll be interspersed with such things as a complete feature index to the LITTLE LULU comic books, a list of the Gold Key code numbers, perhaps indexes to the work of cartoonists like Carl Barks and Walt Kelly, and who knows what else, all depending on how many of my "information gaps" I can fill. I hope to go on to the Dell adventure titles eventually, many of which (ROY ROGERS, for example) I regard with special fondness. Where all this will lead, I'm really not sure, although I'd eventually like to publish some sort of index to all the Dell/Gold Key comics. That's a visionary project, though, and I'm content now to take very small steps of the sort represented by this checklist.

A couple of notes: I have the title of OUR GANG changing from OUR GANG COMICS to OUR GANG WITH TOM & JERRY with #40, which was when the title changed in the indicia at the bottom of the inside front cover. However, the title on the cover of #39 was OUR GANG WITH TOM & JERRY. For the sake of uniformity, I always regard the title in the indicia as the "official" title, unless there clearly has been some mistake. That's not the case here, since Tom and Jerry usurped the cover of OUR GANG with #37, and the words "TOM & JERRY" were featured on the covers of #37 and #38 in large letters.

Although the title remained OUR GANG WITH TOM & JERRY through #59, the June 1949 issue, the last "Our Gang" strip appeared in the April 1949 issue (#57). It was replaced in #58 by "Fuzzy and Wuzzy." Unusually, for a Dell comic, the death of the "Our Gang" strip was signalled by a caption at the top of the last panel:

> And so as the sun sets over beautiful old Shotton's Island, we bid a fond farewell to the friends of Our Gang and wish them luck.

Perhaps this was Walt Kelly's own farewell to a strip he had worked on steadily for seven years, longer than his stay with any other Dell strip, including even "Albert and Pogo." Maybe it wasn't such a fond farewell, at that; that "sunset" business has a tongue-in-cheek sound to it.

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In TIME's story (November 18 issue) about the American Greetings Corporation, there's mention of "an astrologer who owns the largest collection of Batman comic books in Ohio;" just who is that?

W A N T E D :

the following comic books in "very good" or better condition, on the scale in the GUIDEBOOK TO COMICS FANDOM (or "fine/very fine," if you use that scale):

Walt Disney's Comics & Stories - 1-4, 6, 8-11, 17-19, 21, 32.
Donald Duck - Dell Color 4, Four Color 29.
Mickey Mouse - Dell Color 16.
Dumbo - Dell Color 17.
Thumper Meets the Seven Dwarfs - Four Color 19.
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs - Four Color 49.
Dell Black-and-White Disney comic books - all.
Mickey Mouse Magazine - many issues needed.

Looney Tunes & Merrie Melodies - 4, 5, 20, 24.
Bugs Bunny - Large Feature 8, Four Color 33.

The Funnies, Super Comics, Cracajack Funnies - any 1941-42 issues with Walter Lantz strips (Andy Panda, Oswald the Rabbit, etc.)
New Funnies - 66, 70, 78, 87, 90, 93, 98, 100, 103.
Andy Panda - Four Color 25.

Our Gang - 5, 6, 11, 27, 29.

Little Lulu - Four Color 97, one-shots 139, 165.

Animal Comics - 3, 4, 13.
Camp Comics - 2.
Easter with Mother Goose - 185.
Fairy Tale Parade - 3, 4, 6, 8, Four Color 87.
Raggedy Ann & Andy - Four Color 23.
Santa Claus Funnies - 2.

Boys' and Girls' March of Comics (giveaway) - many issues needed, both the full-size pulp-cover issues and the half-size slick-cover issues.
"Peter Wheat" giveaways - most issues needed.
"Donald and Mickey" Firestone Christmas giveaway - 1949 issue needed ("Mint" or "near-mint" replacement copies of all other issues except 1948 also needed).
Omar Super-Book of Comics - 1-3, 5, 8, 9, 13, 16, 18, 20-23, 25, 28, 30 on.

...Not to mention all the mint and near-mint replacement copies I need. There's an up-to-date list of them in the November FANTASY COLLECTOR.